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SUBJECT: BALANCING TRADE, TOURISM, AND SECURITY ON THE MAINE BORDER

REF: Halifax 113

1. Summary: At the Maine-Canada border, disparities between U.S. and Canadian border security initiatives and processes are particularly evident in the areas of customs and immigration unification, technological surveillance capabilities, and border screening priorities. Border officials also voiced sharply differing views on the impact of a proposed new bridge in Calais and the effect of tighter border controls on food shipments to Campobello Island. End Summary.

2. Halifax consular staff visited with CBP (U.S. Customs and Border Protection) and CBSA (Canadian Border Services Agency) July 8-10 on both sides of the Maine-Canada border, at Yarmouth-Bar Harbor, St. Stephen-Calais, and Houlton-Woodstock.

#### Integration

3. Both CBP and CBSA are the result of the respective governments' post 9/11 decisions to unify customs and immigration functions at the border. Overall, CBP seems to be well on its way in the unification of immigration and customs at the ports of entry. Cross-training initiatives appear to be fairly successful with border agents of both legacy agencies working well together in the screening of both passenger and cargo traffic. Some port directors indicated that there was some hesitancy in working towards full integration among those with a long institutional experience; however, retirements combined with influxes of new staff post-9/11 have eased the transition. Most, if not all, supervisors and directors appeared to be making complete unification a priority.

4. CBSA seems to be lagging behind on unification. Although technically under the umbrella institution of CBSA, immigration and customs are still located in separate offices and wear their traditional uniforms. While customs has just recently assumed the management of immigration, few supervisors appear to have had any training in immigration issues. Although the Canadians emphasized the priority of security, U.S. customs and border patrol appeared much closer to a number of their border security goals than their Canadian counterparts. (Comment: It should be noted that CBP had a head start on unification of nearly two years. End Comment.)

#### Infrastructure and Technology

5. Border delays remain an issue of great concern at all the border crossings. Barriers were largely due to infrastructure restraints rather than staffing numbers. This is particularly apparent at Calais, Maine, where a one-lane bridge causes traffic bottlenecks leading to average wait times of one to one-and-one half hours. This has been particularly troublesome for commercial traffic, but will hopefully be resolved with the construction of a new bridge and border crossing, which Calais believes will increase truck traffic. (Note: Ambassador Wilkins will visit the Calais - St. Stephen crossing at the end of July. End note.)

6. However, Houlton and Woodstock border officials said they do not believe the construction of the Calais bridge will result in a diversion of traffic to Calais. Rather, they expect traffic through Houlton-Woodstock would increase from current levels, in spite of the new bridge. The officials noted that insurance companies already charge higher rates to trucking companies who use the St. Stephen-Calais route, vice Woodstock-Houlton, due to the condition of the Route 9 on the Maine side of the Calais border. (Comment: Officials in Calais and St. Stephen stressed the efforts of Maine DOT to keep Route 9 clear in winter months, but made no mention of the subject of insurance. While Maine DOT recognizes the need to further improve Route 9, the State lacks funding to do so. End Comment.) Houlton officials talked of plans for a two-lane expansion to allow for more rapid processing of FAST-pass holders and commercial trucks. Woodstock officials noted the New Brunswick government has already started upgrading the last 30 kilometers of two-lane road on the Canadian side to four lanes. Both agreed that Houlton-Woodstock is, and will continue to be the preferred route for commercial traffic now and in the future.

7. Consulate personnel were given the opportunity to view the processing of both passenger and commercial vehicles at all US POE (ports of entry) and were quite impressed with the technological advances in surveillance and processing. Of particular interest were the video and audio surveillance

technology covering some 20 Maine POE's, which gives Houlton border officials the ability to monitor numerous land ports of entry remotely. Houlton, unlike Calais, does not yet have US-VISIT and could state no timeframe for acquiring such. Woodstock officials noted they had had a great deal of success in enrolling Canadian truckers in FAST, but that US participation levels lagged far behind.

Revenue vs. Security: zero or positive sum?

8. A recent report from the Canadian Senate calling for arming of CBSA personnel and raising of the personnel exemption for Canadian residents was the cause of much speculation amongst Canadian and U.S. border officials. The report proposed a major increase in the amount of allowable goods for returning Canadian residents, freeing expensive resources from the task of revenue collection and reassigning them to strengthening border security. CBSA officials, nevertheless, were quick to point out that border security, and not revenue collection, is always the first priority for Canadian customs officers. U.S. officers were also receptive to this proposal believing that with the strong Canadian dollar this would lead to increased cross-border shopping by Canadians.

Campobello

9. U.S. officials in Calais presented a vastly different picture of the effect of tighter border controls on food shipments to Campobello Island than that conveyed by New Brunswick officials (reftel). CBP officers said traffic to Campobello was flowing normally. They acknowledged there had been growing pains - many on Campobello did not even own computers prior to the regulations implementation. CBP explained they had devoted several officers time over a considerable period, familiarizing Islanders with the new rules and assisting them in complying. The net result, they said, is that traffic is flowing smoothly. During a recent visit to Campobello Island CG noted that the grocery stores seemed to be well-stocked with fresh food and beef.

10. Comment: It is evident that CBP and CBSA are operating under different budgetary restraints - a distinct lack of funding on the Canadian side - and that the CBP is further along in its technological surveillance capability. Nonetheless, Canadian officials were quick to point out that their number one priority remains border security and continued and close cooperation with U.S. Department of Homeland Security officials. Despite significant differences in terms of levels of integration of the customs and immigration branches and different screening processes the post was impressed with the overall efficiency and quality of both countries border security operations. At the end of each meeting an open invitation was extended to both CBP and CBSA officials to visit Consulate Halifax in order to facilitate a continued dialogue and understanding of post's consular operations. Both CBP and CBSA responded positively to the invitations.

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